

Join in Prayer for GC2016



On January 19, Western Pennsylvania United Methodists are invited to take part in 24 hours of prayer for the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, scheduled for May 10-20, 2016 in Portland, Oregon. It's part of 131 days of continual prayer leading up to the legislative event, which is held every four years.

GC2016 begins 131 days after the New Year. There also are 131 annual conferences in the UMC. The Council of Bishops has invited each to arrange a 24-hour prayer effort on a specific date, with the intent of creating a groundswell of prayer leading up to the General Conference. Visit the Western PA Conference website, wpaumc.org, or ask your pastor for details.

Act Against Racism

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Kane District Superintendent Pat Lenox said reading Tochluk's book became a catalyst for him to change and grow by looking at life through an anti-racist lens.

"I had never read an extended dissertation about what White Culture is. It is so easy to think that because I have grown up always doing things certain ways that those ways are normative for everyone. Dr. Tochluk's book peeled back layers, revealing more of what White Culture is and that it is not necessarily the norm. It is simply White Culture, not necessarily right or the best way to be or do," Lenox said.

Other cultures should be valued and appreciated; those of the dominant culture must be exceedingly careful not to misuse their position to hold back or hurt those from other cultures, he added. Many times there is no intention to harm, but often that is the result.

"Being a white male, I see more than ever the great amount of privilege and opportunities that come to me simply because of my gender, skin color and height," Lenox said.

Our world is becoming more diverse and if we are to be the church of all God's people, we must dismantle racism. Let's educate ourselves and find ways to have meaningful conversations about race and implicit bias. Then we can move beyond feelings of recrimination, self-doubt, fear and pain.

Consider taking action. For example:

- Invite the Conference Anti-Racism Team for a workshop. Email Bob Wilson at a49always@gmail.com.
- Start a conversation about how issues related to race are portrayed in the media.
- Pay attention to your surroundings. Many people of color are painfully aware of racist micro-aggressions. For example, if you see an elderly African American ignored while white patrons are served first in a restaurant, speak up.
- Go to an ethnic neighborhood and support the businesses there.
- Post your support of dismantling racism in social media.

For information and ideas, visit wpaumc.org/resources.

wpaumc.org [facebook.com/wpaumc](https://www.facebook.com/wpaumc) twitter.com/wpaumc

Joyful Noise

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MLK Day: A Call to Action

By Dianne Glave and Bob Wilson

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. — Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day falls on Monday, January 18, 2016 this year. It's a day to celebrate Dr. King's life and remember how his work in the Civil Rights Movement prepared the foundation for dismantling racism.

Dr. King gave his life to the cause of civil rights from the mid-1950s to 1968, when he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. He led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with the goal of desegregating society. Dr. King's speeches and writings decry racism.

While progress is being made, there is still a disconnect between Dr. King's call for racial justice and actions across this country, including in the Western Pennsylvania Conference. Implicit bias -- unconscious racism -- is a reality that perpetuates that disconnect.

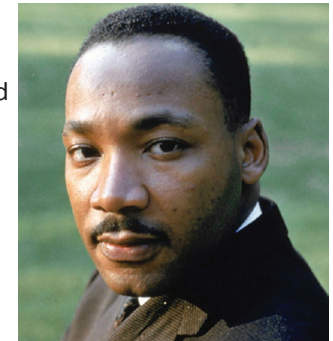
The Conference Anti-Racism Team works to help individuals and congregations understand and act to dismantle racist attitudes and systems. The team offers Implicit Bias Workshops and other resources and training.

One of the challenges of their work is a response that is common among whites in Western Pennsylvania: I don't encounter people of color, so there is nothing I can do.

In the face of fear and denial, God opens up opportunities if we desire change. We need to be prepared to welcome an Asian woman who might walk through the doors of the church. We need to be prepared to accept a couple—a white man and an African American woman—with bi-racial children. We need to be proactive -- to leave our comfort zones, seeking out people of color to slowly develop relationships.

It may help to view a commitment to dismantling racism as a spiritual discipline. A discipline calls us to be intentional—reading scripture and anti-racism resources, reflecting on our own behavior, and embracing people of color in our congregations. A discipline calls us to be accountable to God and others—committing to accountability groups for growth and learning.

Dr. Shelly Tochluk's book, *Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk About Race And How to Do It*, touches on the effectiveness of AWARE groups for whites in Los Angeles. Tochluk became dedicated to confronting issues of race through her experience as a white member of UCLA's All-American Track and Field 4x400 meter relay team and her inner city teaching experiences.



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There is an interesting convergence of thoughts and attitudes taking place in our world today. There is no doubt that, on one side, in our culture we have taken the phrase “instant gratification” to an extreme.

For example, most of us are pretty good with a remote control. We can shift from one channel to another with ease, back up a part of a show that we’ve missed, or even record one program while we are watching another! Whatever you need, you’ve got it at your fingertips!

Have you watched people in restaurants lately? There are more faces staring at smartphones than there are meaningful conversations taking place. People are searching for the instant story, the latest gossip, or a quick fix of the daily news. Whatever you need, you’ve got it at your fingertips!



Have you “googled” anything recently? With one or two typed words in a search engine, you can find anything you want about anything you need! Who needs a Ph.D. when you can have instant access to everything from medical diagnoses to directions on wiring an electrical socket. Talk about energy – we’re plugged in and it’s electric!

We’ve come so far so fast that perhaps we don’t appreciate all the things that we really do have at our fingertips. We’ve made such progress that perhaps we have taken for granted the ways in which we can savor a relationship, wonder at a sunset, stand in awe at a miracle that was way beyond human capacity, and pause just long enough to give thanks for another day of life.

As I think about the hectic pace of life, the development of technologies that feed “instant gratification,” and how easy it is to forget the simple joys of life, I am reminded of this prayer:

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little, when we arrive safely because we have sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when with abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the waters of life; having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity, and in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim.

News and Notes

UMC Scholarships

Students who are United Methodist Church members may apply for a Fall 2016 scholarship online from Jan. 4 – March 1, 2016. Student loans are also available at interest rates as low as 3.75 percent with a credit worthy co-signer. Learn more about scholarships and loans at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry website gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships.

Save the Date

Save Saturday, October 1, 2016 to celebrate the appointment of a new bishop for Western Pennsylvania. A special worship service will be held at 2 p.m. at the Crossfire Campus of the First UM Church in Butler.

New episcopal assignments will be made at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in July. Because Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton has served the maximum of 12 years here, he will be assigned to another area of the Northeast. A celebration of his ministry will be part of annual conference in June. Each District will host gatherings with the Bishop in the Spring.

Fijian Ministry Grows

The Fijian Language Ministry at Point Marion UMC in Fayette County is growing rapidly and making a difference in the church and region. Fijian families, who came to the area for work in the shale gas industry, have become an integral part of life in the local church and beyond. One church outreach effort resulted in 30 area residents getting full-time jobs at West Virginia University Hospitals. Learn more at wpaumc.org/news.

Mini Mission u

Ruth Higginbotham will lead a spiritual growth study on the search for happiness during a mini Mission u from April 17-19 at Olmsted Manor. The study was popular at last summer’s Mission u at California University of PA. Get details and register at olmstedmanor.org.

#Give10 Challenge

Imagine No Malaria reached 90 per cent of its \$75 million fundraising goal recently. A social media campaign has begun for the remaining 10 percent -- the #Give10 Challenge. Get details at wpaumc.org/news or at ImagineNoMalaria.org.

The Journey Continues

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Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery, where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes and to push us into the future in strength, courage, hope, and love.

That prayer was written by Sir Francis Drake, explorer and naval pioneer, in 1577!

For every feeling and emotion and event that tempts us to believe that we are the first people in the history of humanity to experience something, there is a story, a person, and even a prayer written in 1577 that reminds us of one simple fact: we are a work in progress and we need to find a way to let God take us and mold us after God’s will.

May it be so today and tomorrow, even as it has always been.

The Journey Continues, . . .